

# Catalyzing Growth:

## An Economic Impact Analysis of 17 Springs Elmore County, Alabama October 2025



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*Catalyzing Growth: An Economic Impact Analysis of 17 Springs  
Elmore County, Alabama*

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View of the Entry Plaza to the Diamond Fields

## About PARCA

Since its founding in 1988 by Governor Albert Brewer, the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) has operated under a simple but powerful belief: Public policy should be grounded in facts, not factions; in ideas, not ideology. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and non-ideological organization, PARCA does not advocate for specific policies or take a partisan stance. Instead, our mission is to provide sound, independent research that helps leaders ask the right questions, weigh their options, and act in the best interest of the public.

Over the past 35 years, PARCA has partnered with dozens of local governments, state agencies, and school systems across Alabama. Our work has spanned city finances, school performance, tax policy, criminal justice, and workforce development. We have helped communities collaborate, balance budgets, launch new initiatives, and navigate complex challenges—always with a commitment to rigorous analysis and public service.

## Executive Summary

17 Springs located in Millbrook, Alabama, represents a transformational, multi-phase investment initiative designed to drive sustainable regional growth and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. With a total capital commitment of \$100 million, the project was conceived as an anchor for economic expansion, tax revenue generation, and recreational opportunity positioning Elmore County as a leader in sports tourism and community development.

### **Project Scope and Partnership Model:**

Launched through an innovative partnership among the City of Millbrook, YMCA of Greater Montgomery, Elmore County Commission, Elmore County Economic Development Authority, and Elmore County Board of Education, 17 Springs exemplifies collaborative governance and strategic resource allocation. Master planning by the Grandview YMCA of some donated property in 2014 initiated discussions which catalyzed broader community investment and a multi-jurisdictional cooperation. This partnership model has drawn statewide attention as a replicable framework for large-scale community development initiatives.

### **Phased Development Strategy:**

The project comprises three strategically sequenced phases designed to maximize economic impact and operational efficiency:

- **Phase I—The Fields (completed in 2023):** Foundational infrastructure including multi-purpose turf fields and tennis/pickleball courts which attracted over 100,000 visitors in its inaugural year and established the complex as a regional sports destination.
- **Phase II—The Fieldhouse, Stadium and Diamond Fields (completed in 2025):** Expansion including the Fieldhouse event center, additional athletic facilities, and enhanced capacity for concerts and large-scale community events.
- **Phase III—The Marketplace (2025 and beyond):** Commercial district

development featuring dining, hospitality, retail, and entertainment venues designed to capture visitor spending and generate sustained tax revenue streams.

## **Methodological Framework:**

This analysis employs rigorous, industry-standard methodologies to ensure credible and defensible economic impact projections. IMPLAN input-output modeling quantifies direct, indirect, and induced effects across construction, operations, and visitor spending categories. Geofencing technology via Placer AI provided accurate, privacy-compliant visitor quantification based on over 419,000 annual visitors from 27 states. All construction values reflect year-of-expenditure dollars, while operations and visitor impacts are projected in 2026 dollar terms, providing contemporary relevance for policy planning and investment decisions.

## **Quantified Economic Impact Findings:**

The comprehensive economic analysis reveals substantial and sustained benefits across multiple impact categories:

***Construction Phase Impacts:*** Total direct spending of \$103 million generated \$131.3 million in total economic output and supported 787 jobs during the multi-year construction period, demonstrating immediate economic activation.

***Annual Operations Impact:*** Facility operations contribute \$463,012 in annual economic output while directly supporting 4 permanent jobs, with additional indirect employment throughout the service sector.

***Visitor Spending Impact:*** The primary driver of long-term economic benefit, visitor expenditures range from \$48.2 million to \$67.2 million annually, supporting between 395 and 566 jobs depending on overnight visitor scenarios and spending patterns.

***Marketplace Commercial Development:*** The planned commercial district is projected to generate \$107.6 million in total economic output and support 911 jobs, representing the largest single component of the project's economic impact.

***Aggregate Annual Impact:*** Once fully operational, the combined effect of ongoing operations, visitor spending, and the Marketplace Commercial Development is expected to generate between \$156 million and \$175 million in annual economic activity, supporting roughly 1,310 to 1,481 jobs across the county. On average, this translates to about \$166 million each year, sustaining more than 1,396 local jobs. These estimates do not include the additional short-term economic impacts from construction activity spending.

### **Broader Economic and Social Benefits:**

Beyond quantified financial impacts, 17 Springs generates substantial qualitative benefits that enhance regional competitiveness and resident well-being. Tax revenue growth from the project enabled Elmore County to commit over \$30 million to additional quality-of-life initiatives across the county, demonstrating fiscal multiplier effects. Public health benefits from increased recreational access may yield up to \$1,500 in annual healthcare savings per adult and over \$600 in productivity gains per employee. The project's role in resident and business attraction is particularly significant, with modest household retention generating 15 additional jobs and \$572,000 in annual labor income.

### **Strategic Industry Context:**

17 Springs aligns with robust national trends in sports tourism, an industry generating \$128 billion in total economic impact and supporting 757,600 jobs nationally in 2023. The project's integrated approach—combining athletic facilities with hospitality infrastructure—addresses a critical success factor identified in industry research: the need for comprehensive visitor amenities to maximize local economic capture. Elmore County's existing strengths in retail trade and accommodation services, combined with a location quotient of 2.02 in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, position the region for sustained growth in the sports tourism sector.

## Implications for Regional Development:

The 17 Springs project represents more than incremental economic development; it constitutes a paradigm shift toward collaborative, multi-phase community investment that leverages public-private partnerships for maximum impact. The initiative's success in generating immediate visitor attraction, sustainable job creation, and ongoing tax revenue demonstrates the viability of sports tourism as an economic development strategy for mid-sized communities. As a replicable model for similar jurisdictions, 17 Springs offers valuable insights for regional planners, economic development professionals, and policymakers seeking to balance recreational amenities with economic growth objectives.



*Ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of The Fieldhouse at 17 Springs*

## 17 SPRINGS ECONOMIC IMPACT SUMMARY

<b>CONSTRUCTION</b>			
	DIRECT SPENDING	TOTAL OUTPUT	EMPLOYMENT
PHASE 1	\$16,000,000.00	\$20,384,453.44	123.86
PHASE 2	\$82,000,000.00	\$104,531,993.33	625.82
MARKET	\$5,000,000.00	\$6,377,823.23	37.62
<b>TOTAL CONSTRUCTION</b>	<b>\$103,000,000.00</b>	<b>\$131,294,270.00</b>	<b>787.3</b>
<b>OPERATIONS</b>			
	DIRECT SPENDING	TOTAL OUTPUT	EMPLOYMENT
ANNUAL IMPACT PER YEAR	\$300,000.00	<b>\$463,012.58</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>VISITOR SPENDING - LOW END</b>			
	DIRECT SPENDING	TOTAL OUTPUT	EMPLOYMENT
VISITORS - DAY (310,090 x \$50)	15,504,480	\$18,775,916.00	129
VISITORS - OVERNIGHT (108,950 x \$220)	23,969,088	\$29,454,159.00	266
TOTAL VISITOR SPENDING	39,473,568	<b>\$48,230,075.00</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>VISITOR SPENDING - HIGH END</b>			
	DIRECT SPENDING	TOTAL OUTPUT	EMPLOYMENT
VISITORS - DAY (310,090 x \$50)	15,504,480	\$18,775,916.00	129
VISITORS - OVERNIGHT (108,950 x \$361.75)	34,509,912.50	\$48,449,584.00	437
TOTAL VISITOR SPENDING	50,014,393	<b>\$67,225,500.00</b>	<b>566</b>
<b>MARKETPLACE REVENUE ESTIMATES</b>			
ESTIMATE BASED ON PLANNED VENUES AS OF JULY 2025	82,000,000	\$ <b>107,643,086</b>	<b>911</b>
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT CAN RANGE FROM \$156M TO \$175M</b>			

*Chart 1: Summary of the Economic Impact of 17 Springs (Details found in Major Findings Section)*

## Project Overview

The 17 Springs development in Millbrook, Elmore County, Alabama, is a collaborative project divided into three major phases, each driving significant economic and community growth for the region.

### Phase 1 – The Fields

Phase 1, completed in 2023, focused on building multi-purpose turf fields and tennis/pickleball facilities. This initial stage represented about 20% of the total project and quickly attracted more than 100,000 guests through regional tournaments and local sporting events. The development of these athletic fields enabled new programs for local schools and recreation groups and put Millbrook on the map for sports tourism.



*Tennis and pickleball courts in Phase I of 17 Springs*

## Phase 2 – The Fieldhouse, Stadium and Diamond Fields

Phase 2, built during 2024 and early 2025, brought major additions to the complex—including the Fieldhouse event center and an outdoor stadium venue upgraded with a turf field for football and soccer, surrounded by a competition track. The phase also added six turf diamond fields designed to accommodate either collegiate-level softball or up to 12U baseball games, a grass field for field events, social gatherings, and youth competitions, as well as additional turf fields and other facility enhancements. More than 100 construction workers contributed to this effort. With these improvements, the complex now has a greater capacity to host concerts and large events. The Fieldhouse opened in early 2025 serving as a new center for sports, concerts, and community activities.



*The Fieldhouse at 17 Springs, a multi-purpose event and sports facility, opened in early 2025.*



*Front view of the Fieldhouse complex featuring ticket and entry plaza.*



*Interior of The Fieldhouse showcasing multi-court athletic space and event flexibility.*



*Stadium and multipurpose field facility*



*View of the 17 Springs Complex*

### **Phase 3 – The Marketplace**

Phase 3, planned for 2025 and beyond, focuses on developing an adjacent commercial district called “The Marketplace at 17 Springs”. This phase includes opportunities for new dining, hospitality, retail, and entertainment venues. As of summer 2025, construction planning is underway, with hotels and commercial partners preparing to join the completed athletic and event facilities. The Marketplace is expected to generate steady tax revenue for Elmore County and further increase visitor spending.

Each stage of the project builds on successful partnerships between Millbrook, the Elmore County Commission, local schools, the YMCA, and other stakeholders, contributing to sustained growth and quality-of-life improvements throughout the county.



*Aerial showing completed Marketplace infrastructure.*

## Methodological Approach

Economic impact was measured using IMPLAN input-output modeling, standard in academic and policy studies for quantifying direct, indirect, and induced effects of capital investment, operations, and visitor spending. IMPLAN was employed in this study as the principal tool for economic impact analysis, ensuring industry-standard rigor and transparency in estimating the projected effects of the 17 Springs project. However, it is vital to acknowledge that economic impact analysis, while rooted in sound theory, produces estimates rather than exact outcomes.

### IMPLAN Methodology

IMPLAN (IMpact analysis for PLANning) is a widely utilized input-output modeling system in economic analysis and policy evaluation. This approach quantifies the direct, indirect, and induced effects of a project by modeling how spending—on construction, operations, and visitor expenditures—flows through interconnected sectors in a local economy.

- Direct effects cover initial project spending such as wages, construction outlays, and operations.
- Indirect effects quantify the economic activity generated as project suppliers purchase additional goods and services.
- Induced effects capture the broader economic changes resulting from new household income and spending by employees and suppliers.
- By integrating local industry relationships, IMPLAN creates a comprehensive profile of how dollars circulate and multiply within the community, leading to robust estimates of impacts on economic output, jobs, and income.

### Importance of Validated Methodology

Employing a validated methodology such as IMPLAN is critical for credibility, reliability, and replicability in economic research.

- IMPLAN adheres to standardized, peer-reviewed inputs and regional multipliers, which minimizes bias and provides comparable results across studies and jurisdictions.
- Policymakers, investors, and stakeholders rely on these recognized tools to inform decision-

making, allocating resources based on transparent and defensible data.

## **Limits and Nature of Economic Impact Estimates**

It is important to emphasize that these findings are projections rather than guarantees, and economic impact analysis is an inherently imperfect science.

- Real-world outcomes may differ due to market shifts, consumer preferences, policy changes, and unforeseen external events.
- The analysis uses the best available data and validated models to provide reasonable estimates, but it cannot predict every facet of future economic performance.

Ultimately, the results should be interpreted as informed guidance—valuable for planning and evaluation, but subject to adjustment as more data and context become available.

## **Geofencing Visitor Analysis Using Placer.AI**

Geofencing represents a modern and precise method for measuring visitor counts and movement patterns by leveraging location data from mobile devices. For the 17 Springs project, Placer AI was utilized to generate robust estimates of visitation during the initial five months of operation, forming the basis for annual projections used in the economic impact model.

Placer AI geofencing technology works by establishing virtual geographic boundaries around a defined area—such as the 17 Springs complex—and aggregating anonymous signals from devices that enter or dwell within those boundaries.

- The resulting dataset includes counts of visits, visitor origins, repeat visits, and time spent on-site, yielding actionable insights for planners and analysts.
- Importantly, all information collected by Placer AI is personally non-identifying. No personally identifiable information (PII) is captured, stored, or transmitted in the geofencing process, ensuring full compliance with privacy standards and ethical research practices.

By employing anonymous and aggregated data, geofencing with Placer AI balances high accuracy in visitor measurement with unwavering protection of individual privacy. This provides a reliable

empirical foundation for projections, while safeguarding the identities and personal habits of event attendees and facility users.

Visitor volumes were extrapolated from Placer AI geofence data for the first five months, estimating 419,040 annual visitors. The breakdown is as follows:

- 74% Elmore County residents
- 23% other Alabama counties
- 3% out-of-state visitors (27 states represented)

Impact categories encompass construction spending (measured in the actual year of outlay), annual operations, visitor spending (projected for 2026), and anticipated Marketplace returns.

## Major Findings

### Construction Phase Economic Impact (2024-2025 dollar values)

*All construction values are based on the year dollars were spent.*

- Aggregate Direct Expenditure: \$103,000,000
- Total Economic Output: \$131,294,270
- Employment Supported: 787 jobs

*Table 1: Construction Phase Breakdowns*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Direct Spending</b>	<b>Total Economic Output</b>	<b>Jobs Supported</b>
Phase I	\$16,000,000	\$20,384,453	124 jobs
Phase II	\$82,000,000	\$104,531,993	626 jobs
Marketplace	\$5,000,000	\$6,377,823	38 jobs

### Annual Operations Economic Impact (2026 dollars)

*All operations impacts are projected for 2026 in 2026-dollar values.*

- Direct Spending: \$300,000
- Total Economic Output: \$463,013
- Employment: 4 jobs

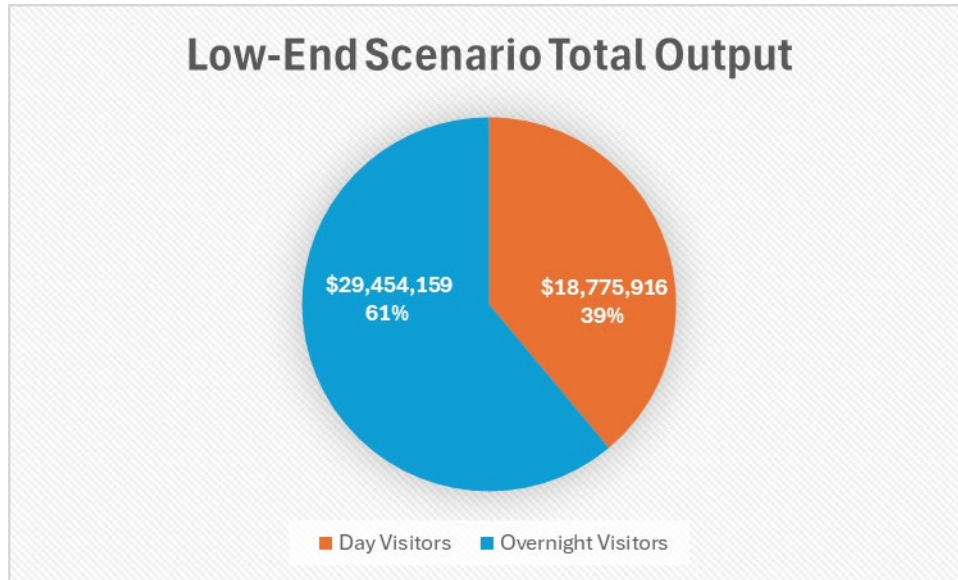
### Visitor Spending Economic Impact (2026 dollars)

*All visitor impacts are projected for 2026 in 2026 dollar values.*

Estimated annual visitor volume: 419,040

- **Low-End Scenario:**

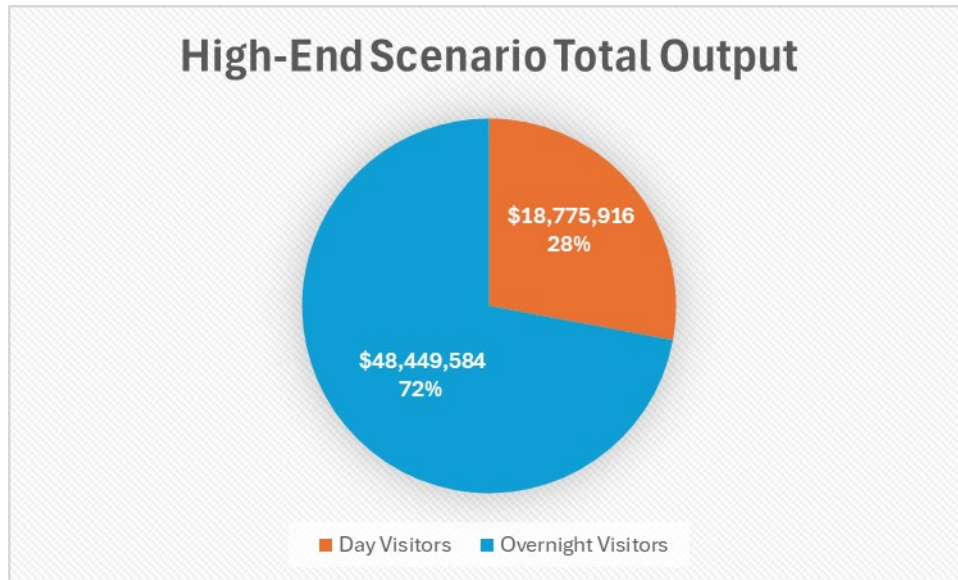
- Day visitors: \$15,504,480 direct, \$18,775,916 economic output, 129 jobs
- Overnight visitors: \$23,969,088 direct, \$29,454,159 economic output, 266 jobs
- Total: \$48,230,075 economic output, 395 jobs



*Figure 1: Visitor Spending Low-End Scenario Total Economic Output*

- **High-End Scenario:**

- Day visitors: \$15,504,480 direct, \$18,775,916 economic output, 129 jobs
- Overnight visitors: \$34,509,913 direct, \$48,449,584 economic output, 437 jobs
- Total: \$67,225,500 economic output, 566 jobs



*Figure 2 Visitor Spending High-End Scenario Total Economic Output*

### **Marketplace Projected Revenue Impact (2026 dollars)**

- Estimated Direct Expenditure: \$82,000,000
- Total Economic Output: \$107,643,086
- Employment: 911 jobs

### **Aggregate Annual Impact**

Combined effect of ongoing operations, visitor spending, and the Marketplace Commercial Development (not including any construction – 2026 dollars):

- Total Annual Economic Impact: \$156 million–\$175 million
- Jobs Supported: 1,310–1,481
- Best Estimate: \$166 million total annual economic output, 1,396 jobs (2026 dollars)

## **Qualitative and Societal Benefits**

The 17 Springs project delivers extensive non-financial benefits:

- **Quality of Life:** Modern amenities stimulate community pride and enhance resident morale. As a result, Elmore County commissioned over \$30 million in additional quality-of-life projects based on growth in local sales and lodging taxes.
- **Public Health:** Recreational access is linked to reductions in chronic health conditions and healthcare expenditure. Increased physical activity may save up to \$1,500 per adult per year and boost productivity, yielding over \$600 in employer savings per employee annually.
- **Resident and Business Attraction:** The enhanced community environment aids in recruiting talent and retaining households, where just 30 new or retained families could result in 15 jobs and \$572,000 in additional labor income per year.
- **Tax Revenue:** The Marketplace’s retail, dining, and hospitality assets are expected to generate sustained tax receipts, offsetting public investment and supporting infrastructure expansion.
- **Strategic Model:** The collaborative approach is lauded as innovative and a potential template for similar organizations nationally.

## **Industry Context and Comparative Analysis**

Sports tourism has become a major economic force nationally. From 2005–2022, the youth travel sports sector grew at 5.6% annually, attracting over \$9 billion in venue investment since 2017. In 2023, U.S. sports tourism generated \$52.2 billion in direct spending and a \$128 billion total economic impact, supporting 757,600 jobs and \$20.1 billion in taxes.

Effective sports complexes require robust hospitality infrastructure. National case studies highlight that lacking hotels or dining options shifts most economic impact outside the host community. The Marketplace’s proposed mix of hotels, restaurants, and retail directly addresses this, ensuring local benefit maximization.

Elmore County’s employment base is already heavily concentrated in Retail Trade and Accommodation, which are poised for growth through increased visitor spending. Notably, the region’s

location quotient for Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation is 2.02, indicating strong sectoral positioning for further expansion.

## Conclusion

The 17 Springs project represents a landmark achievement in strategic community investment and collaborative governance, establishing a new benchmark for regional economic development in Alabama and beyond. The comprehensive economic impact analysis demonstrates that this \$100 million initiative will generate substantial, measurable returns through multiple channels while simultaneously advancing broader community development objectives.

### **Transformative Economic Impact:**

The quantified benefits of 17 Springs—\$166 million in projected annual economic output and support for nearly 1,400 jobs—position the project as one of the most significant economic development initiatives in Elmore County's history. These impacts extend far beyond the immediate project boundaries, creating ripple effects throughout the regional economy through increased consumer spending, business investment, and tax revenue generation. The project's multi-phase structure ensures sustained economic activation over an extended timeline, with each development stage building upon previous investments to compound community benefits.

### **Innovation in Public-Private Collaboration:**

Perhaps equally significant is 17 Springs' demonstration of effective multi-jurisdictional partnership. The collaboration among the City of Millbrook, Elmore County Commission, YMCA, Economic Development Authority, and Board of Education represents a sophisticated approach to resource pooling and risk sharing that maximizes public investment while leveraging private sector expertise. This model has attracted attention from economic development professionals statewide and offers a replicable framework for similar communities seeking to undertake large-scale development projects.

### **Strategic Positioning for Future Growth:**

The project positions Elmore County advantageously within the rapidly expanding sports

tourism industry, which has experienced consistent growth and proven resilience across economic cycles. By integrating athletic facilities with commercial and hospitality infrastructure through The Marketplace, 17 Springs addresses critical success factors for sports tourism destinations while ensuring maximum local economic capture. The facility's ability to host diverse events—from youth sports tournaments to concerts and community gatherings—provides operational flexibility and revenue diversification that enhance long-term sustainability.

### **Community Development and Quality of Life Enhancement:**

Beyond economic metrics, 17 Springs catalyzes broader community improvement through enhanced recreational opportunities, public health benefits, and increased civic pride. The project's success in generating tax revenues to fund \$20 million in additional county-wide improvements demonstrates its role as an economic multiplier and is enabling further public investment in community amenities and infrastructure. These quality-of-life enhancements coupled with investments made by and with the City of Wetumpka, the City of Tallassee, Tallassee City Schools and Elmore County Board of Education support resident retention and business attraction, creating positive feedback loops that sustain long-term economic growth.

### **Methodological Rigor and Analytical Framework:**

The employment of industry-standard analytical tools—including IMPLAN economic modeling and Placer AI geofencing technology—ensures that impact projections rest on solid empirical foundations. The careful distinction between construction costs (in year-of-expenditure dollars) and operational projections (in 2026 dollar terms) provides clarity for stakeholders and enables accurate comparison with other economic development initiatives. This methodological approach, combined with transparent documentation of assumptions and limitations, establishes credibility for the analysis and supports informed decision-making by policymakers and community leaders.

### **Sustainability and Long-Term Viability:**

The project's phased development approach, combined with its diversified revenue streams

and broad-based community support, positions 17 Springs for sustained success across varying economic conditions. The integration of permanent recreational infrastructure with evolving commercial opportunities allows the complex to adapt to changing market demands while maintaining core functionality. The strong visitor numbers achieved during Phase I operations—over 100,000 guests in the first year—validate demand projections and support confidence in long-term economic impact estimates.

### **Implications for Regional Economic Development:**

17 Springs demonstrates that mid-sized communities can successfully compete in the sports tourism market through strategic investment, collaborative planning, and innovative partnership structures. The project's success offers valuable lessons for similar communities considering sports-based economic development strategies, particularly regarding the importance of integrated facility planning and multi-stakeholder engagement. As national interest in youth sports continues to grow and communities seek sustainable economic development alternatives, 17 Springs provides a compelling case study in effective implementation and impact measurement.

### **Forward-Looking Perspective:**

As 17 Springs moves toward full implementation with The Marketplace development, the project is positioned to exceed initial economic projections while serving as a catalyst for additional private investment in the region. The facility's role in establishing Elmore County as a regional sports tourism destination creates opportunities for complementary business development, hospitality expansion, and related service sector growth. The collaborative governance model pioneered through this initiative provides a foundation for future community development efforts, ensuring that 17 Springs represents not just an economic development success, but a transformation in how Elmore County approaches strategic planning and public-private partnership.

In conclusion, the 17 Springs project exemplifies the potential for well-conceived, collaboratively implemented economic development initiatives to generate substantial, sustained benefits for communities willing to invest in long-term strategic planning. The combination of rigorous economic impact analysis, innovative partnership structures, and

comprehensive development planning positions this initiative as a model for similar communities and a cornerstone of Elmore County's economic future.

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